



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTE.

ON LATIN *nihil* 'NAUGHT, NOT.'

The etymology of Latin *nihil* seems to me to be still in need of explanation. Brugmann keeps a dead silence as to its origin, in the Grundriss. Victor Henry hazards nothing as to its formation, in his Grammaire comparée. All that Stolz says (Iw. Müller's Hdbch.², p. 315) is "*nihil* neben *nihilum*." Wharton (Etym. Lat., s. v.) makes this entry: "*nī* not, see *nī*, + adj.-ending -*ULO*-. Ovid has *nihil* through a popular connection with *hīlum*." The entries in Lewis and Short's lexicon, s. v. *hīlum*, do not vindicate the actuality of any such word. When Ennius divides *ne-que . . . hīlum*, the skeptically minded will bethink themselves of his method of tmesis in 'saxo *cere-* comminuit *-brum*.' I am of the opinion that *hīlum* is the veriest of ghost-words, although F. H. Fowler, in what is probably the last treatment of the word ('The Negatives of the Indo-European Languages,' Univ. of Chicago dissertation), allows himself to write **ne-hīlum*.

To make a new explanation of the word, I start with **nihilum*, with a by-form *nihl*, which originated before vowels, and was shortened in its (pen-)ultimate quantity by the operation of the iambic law: from *nihl* the adverb *nihilo* got its quantity. Still, the quantity of *nihilo* may be due to shortening in composition, a phenomenon we cannot yet precisely limit, but may not forthright deny.

I propose to divide **nihilum* into *ne + hi + elum*: *-hi-* is the particle affixed to Aryan **ne* (or a compound of **ne-*) in Sk. *nahi* and Lith. *neigì*, affixed in Greek to a new negative particle in *ov-χι*.

We have next to explain **-elum*. We may define *nihil* very exactly by Eng. *naught* 'no any whit,' and its by-form *not* 'non.' It is to be noted also that Lat. *non*, the ordinary negative, is a compound of *ne + unum*; and compound negatives meet us in French *ne—point*, Ital. *non—punto* 'not at all.' We may seek, therefore, in **-elum* for the meaning 'whit, bit.'

For this we can find plenty of cognates: to begin with, *elementum* 'atom.' I am aware of the explanation of *elementum* from the names of the letters *el* + *em* + *en*, but, ingenious as it is, it has never seemed to me plausible. I lean, for my own part, to the comparison of *elementum* with Sk. *añú* 'fine, thin'—as noun 'atom'—*añimán* 'the finest particles of an object.'

Here, too, we may refer *álakam* (R.V.) 'to no purpose,' Lat. 'parum.'

Greek is also not without cognates, for we may well put here *δλί-γος* 'short,' which G. Meyer explains as *δ-λίγος* (with prothetic *δ-*), comparing Lith. *ligà* 'illness' and noting the Hesychian gloss *λιζόν· ἑλαττον*; while Prellwitz in his dictionary suggests, with a query, a connection with Homeric *λίγδην* (adv.) 'grazing.' As to its formation, *δλίγος* is a *quasi* rhyme-word with *δολιχός* 'long.'

Another Greek cognate is *ἐλαχύς* 'small.' Here again the *ε-* has met its explanation as a prothetic vowel, because of Sk. *laghú*, Lat. *levis*. But we have to do here, I suggest, either with the problem of dissyllabic gradation, or with a case of contamination of two stems meaning 'small.'

It is easier to declare for the latter alternative, and we have a parallel case to our hands in Gk. *ἐρυθρός* 'red,' in which we should see not only a cognate of Sk. *rudhirá*, but also a cognate of Sk. *aru-ṛá*, both meaning 'red.' Why not?

This evidence seems to me enough to warrant us in positing an Aryan base *el-* 'small, a bit, whit.' A trace of this *el-* I would see in Latin *nihil* 'naught, not.'

LEXINGTON, VA., Oct. 18, 1897.

EDWIN W. FAY.